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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ATHENS 001657

SIPDIS

FROM THE AMBASSADOR TO THE DEPUTY SECRETARY  
AMEMBASSY ANKARA PASS TO AMCONSUL ADANA  
AMEMBASSY ASTANA PASS TO AMCONSUL ALMATY  
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF  
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL LEIPZIG  
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA  
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG  
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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG

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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR THE DEPUTY SECRETARY'S VISIT TO GREECE

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CLASSIFIED BY: Deborah A. McCarthy, Deputy Chief of Mission; REASON:  
1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Welcome to Greece. There have been a lot of changes here since you last visited in June. We are now building on the opportunities presented by new Administrations in both Washington and Athens to cement a partnership that can confront common strategic challenges beyond the regional issues that have come to define our relationship in recent years. The good news is that the Papandreou government is far more willing to be seen to work with us than were previous Greek governments. It has been encouraging to see his initial steps on Macedonia and Turkey, in particular. However, domestic politics including the dire circumstances of the Greek economy may limit Papandreou's flexibility to implement bold foreign policy moves as time goes on.

¶2. (C) Papandreou and his Ministers have been open with us in expressing their desire for close bilateral partnership, and continue to stress that the government supports both EU accession for Turkey and integration into Euroatlantic structures for Macedonia. We welcome this, but our challenge is at the tactical level, as Greece holds firm to clearly stated redlines on both issues. Papandreou's approach to both of these issues has been to seek to build first a more positive environment with interlocutors, upon a belief that emphasizing personal relationships may be more successful in tackling long-simmering disputes. His trip to Istanbul for a meeting with PM Erdogan four days after taking office, his call for western Balkans EU accession by 2014, his early contacts with PM Gruevski, and his recent initiative for an "environmental summit" with his Albanian and Macedonian neighbors evidence this strategy.

¶3. (C) You can help reinforce Papandreou's positive tendencies in your meeting with him, and seek to establish closer bilateral coordination of Greek tactics to avoid setbacks such as the negative public manner in which negotiator Vassilakis' recent meeting with UN mediator Nimetz was portrayed. This will be important in the run up to the early December EU Council decisions on Turkey and Macedonia. A nudge to Papandreou in the right direction combined with a continued willingness to "listen" to

Greek needs from Turkey and Macedonia, can help encourage Greece to take an approach that advances our equities, while keeping EU processes from derailing. On a strategic level, your bilat with Papandreou can reconfirm the emphasis the Administration places on broadening our relations with Greece and advance some individual issues, including:

14. (C) EU: On Macedonia, the Greeks have stressed to us repeatedly their support for Macedonia's Euroatlantic aspirations, yet they have been equally clear: they cannot support EU accession talks without a satisfactory resolution to the name issue. Papandreou will need to know that we expect Greek flexibility to avoid a "hard landing" for Macedonian aspirations in Brussels come December, and that we are pressing Macedonia equally hard to make the EU meeting a success. On Turkey, Papandreou continues to support accession, but his diplomatic advisor recently told us he needed "something" from Turkey on Aegean overflights, immigration, or the Halki Seminary in order to justify a forward leaning position in Brussels to a skeptical Greek populace.

15. (C) BALKANS: PM Papandreou has launched an initiative calling for full integration of the Balkans into European institutions by 2014, which he will present to the European Council on December 9. His staff has told us this was meant as a clear signal to Macedonia, and has told us Papandreou intends to take a leadership role in the region that he believes his predecessor let slide. Alternate Foreign Minister Droutsas has toured Western Balkan capitals to introduce the concept. In addition to the bilateral contact between Papandreou and Gruevski in Brussels earlier this

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month, the PM on November 24 invited his Albanian and Macedonian counterparts to Prespes National Park where the Greece, Macedonian, and Albanian borders come together, ostensibly to discuss environmental issues. Greek press has already accused Papandreou of making a thinly veiled overture to Gruesvki.

16. (C) TURKEY/AEGEAN: Papandreou took the first step of traveling to Istanbul for a meeting with PM Erdogan on the margins of an international conference, and seeks a broad, personal dialogue. A response to PM Erdogan's letter following up on that meeting is forthcoming. He believes in Turkish EU accession, but not with a "blank check," as we have been told by interlocutors. The GOG is disappointed at the resumption of overflights of inhabited Aegean islands by Turkish military aircraft, but has not politicized this issue as compared to past government reactions. Papandreou faces a tough balancing act at the EU in December, between the strategic imperative of Turkish EU accession, which he supports, and Turkish actions which anger the Greek population he must answer to. ASD Vershbow and Alternate MOD Beglitis discussed informally on November 16 the idea of a "rules of the road" for all of NATO's airspace that would be equally applicable to the Aegean. Beglitis thought the idea was interesting in a NATO context, as Greece does not trust bilateral Turkish proposals on the Aegean. You can usefully ask Papandreou his views on how he intends to manage the Brussels decision in December, and encourage him to stay on the right path.

17. (C) AFGHANISTAN/PAKISTAN: The Greek public, and correspondingly the Greek government, has a difficult time linking success in Afghanistan with their national security. They have also paid close attention to our domestic debate as it has unfolded in Washington, looking carefully for any clues to our future course. They recently announced that Greece would not expand its ISAF effort by deploying its previously caveat-bound Kabul engineering battalion out to RC-West, thus walking back a commitment made to President Obama by the previous Karamanlis government. However, they will maintain an engineering presence in

Kabul, will make a 3 million euro contribution to the ANA Trust Fund, will send two small medical teams to the North, will send approximately 20 additional trainers, and intend to spend approximately 6 millions for development assistance. You can help them see the importance of success in Afghanistan to Greek, European, and global security; assure them of our continued commitment and leadership in Afghanistan; and encourage them to do more, particularly on the Army and Police training fronts.

18. (C) VISA WAIVER AND WASHINGTON VISIT: Greece continues to wait for Visa Waiver. The remaining step is for Secretary of Homeland Security Napolitano to sign the designation memo which, for legal reasons, she is unable to do until the White House provides the announcement and implementation dates. The Greeks have not pressed us much on this issue lately, but have dropped continuing hints of the PM's desire for an early visit to Washington.

19. (U) We are very much looking forward to your visit and hosting you here in Athens.  
Speckhard